

LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

MARCH
1992

COMMUNITY

*God created us to be
in community. Together
we are a rich tapestry
and design.*

FEB 13 REC'D

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Graduate Theological Union

For Growth in Faith and Mission

Letters to the editor ♦♦

Thanks

I want to say THANKS for the November issue. It is one of the best you have put together. There is something everyone can relate to. As we went through the study, each brought up someone who needed help that others weren't aware of.

Anne Renkly

Arlington, South Dakota

More on WIC

Just a word of appreciation for the informative page about WIC [Women and Children in Poverty] in the November LWT. Sending letters and birthday candles to Congress in 1989 was very fruitful and meaningful. In addition, since Congress is not yet committed to full funding, concerned persons in at least 20 states have succeeded in getting their *state* legislatures to appropriate funds for WIC. Until 1989, WIC was entirely a federal program under the Department of Agriculture. Now many states are also participating. Urge all *state* legislatures, and Congress, to be generous in funding WIC.

Esther B. McBride

Rio Rancho, New Mexico

Milk-toast theology?

We want to compliment LWT on the "Women and Children Living in Poverty" articles in the November issue. In September "Letters" Ruth Stierna of Virginia spoke of LWT "homogenized, milk-toast theology and avoidance of discussion of the hard issues of today. We would like to add our voices in agreement. There are so many problems directly involving women: violence to women and children, quality health care for everyone, care of the elderly—the list is almost endless. Where better to read articles informing us on the ELCA's position on abortion or equal right or affirmative action than in our own magazine for women? Please continue to publish articles [like those in November] that provide support and guidance in matters so vital to women today.

Jean Fladeboe

and the Ruth Circle

Salem Lutheran Church

Longville, Minnesota

Hooray!

Finally! A Bible study that is a Bible study. This [September

Continued on inside back cover

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In a southern Tanzanian village a Makonde artist imagines and carves in ebony an image. It is an image shaped by the artist's life, values, and community. The curved, circular shapes suggest a communal circle, not a hierarchy; the figures touching express mutual support in common task.

Those of us shaped by the values of individualism may find our sensibilities disturbed by this portrayal of community. Our words say we value community, but our lives often deny it. Even "support groups," our modern attempts to construct community, arise from the foundations of individualism: our desire for personal assistance and affirmation.

Community is radical. Both the biblical Hebrew and the traditional African understandings of community reveal a critical, prophetic perspective on our values and our way of life. Community is more than collective individualism. Community does not collect individuals, it creates a new entity.

The Makonde artist presents human touch expressively and extravagantly. Human figures in contact . . . supporting . . . lifting . . . encouraging. In our society we often speak of touch that invades, that imposes, that by intent is destructive, that tears down and leaves behind wounded souls.

But the unknown African artist who created the *ujamaa* sculpture on the front cover of this magazine reminds us also of touch that supports, and gives affection, that lifts souls to a richer experience of love and grace.

My Western culture shapes me so that I value diversified tasks, individual gifts, personal talents. The *ujamaa* artist's work speaks not of diversity, but of singleness of effort—one task, one job. Community gives life through its common will and singleness of purpose.

Where are the standouts, the superstars in this sculpture? There are none. In community's circle there is little place for the higher achiever at the expense of the lesser. Continuity of the whole is more important than hierarchy benefiting the few.

This artist from another place and from other values gives us not only refreshingly beautiful shapes and textures, but a radical "word" as well. Can we hear? Can we return to community? To do so may be earth's only hope, our grandchildren's only possibility. ■

Daniel W. Olson
Program director for English-speaking West and Southern Africa
ELCA Division for Global Mission

ON THE COVER: Tanzanian *ujamaa* carving represents community. Photographed by Greg Helgeson, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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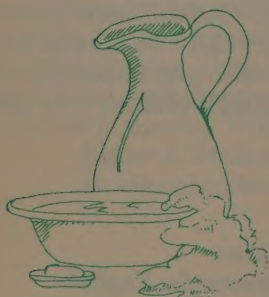
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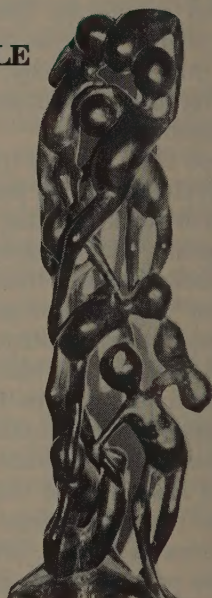
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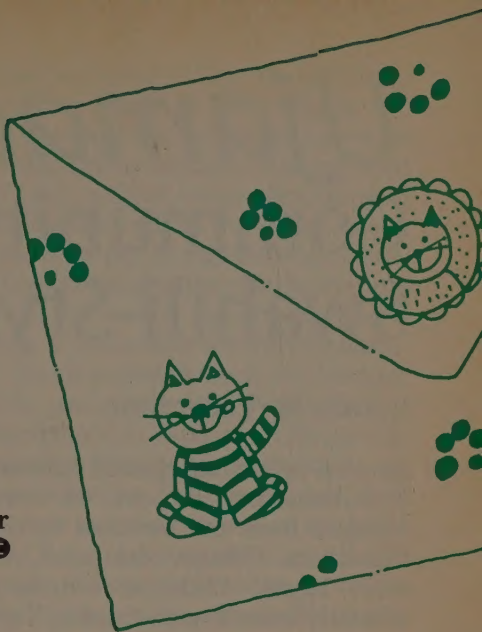
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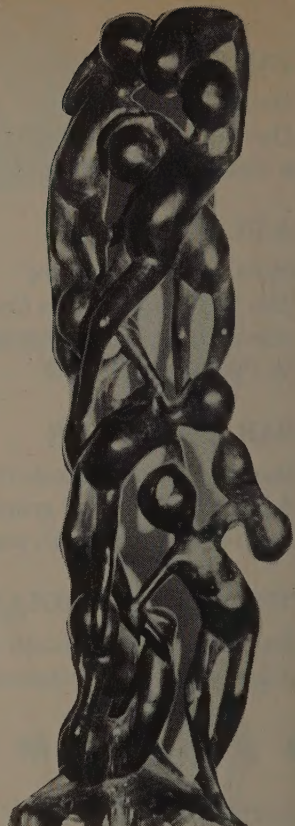
Ujamaa: Community, Swahili-Style

Lynda M. Tidemann

As soon as we had cleared customs at Kilimanjaro airport, we were whisked from the terminal to the Theological College, Makumira, Africa's largest Lutheran seminary, which is located near Arusha, Tanzania. The students had finished the quarter's work and were gathered in the chapel for the closing Eucharist. We were ushered into the service, then invited to join them at the altar to receive the bread and wine. We hastily dropped our bags and knelt with our Tanzanian brothers and sisters to share in the communion feast.

During the final hymn, the seminarians streamed outside to encircle us with a song, "We are all tied together, so come back here." I was deeply moved. We had been in Tanzania little more than one hour, yet we were already part of the family.

It was my introduction to *ujamaa*, a Swahili word that means "familyhood," the entire community woven together in all of life. The idea of *ujamaa* gained national attention in Tanzania when the former president of the country, Julius Nyerere, moved people from small scattered villages into larger units to encourage cooperative farming. I soon learned that the Makonde tribe is known for its beautiful *ujamaa* carvings, and I was determined to have one.



Ujamaa is a Swahili word that means familyhood, the entire community woven together in all of life.

I entered a local hotel and greeted by a roomful of intricate *ujamaa* carvings, each one picturing a group of people of all sizes and ages entwined in each other's lives. Some of the representatives were realistic, others stylized. I scanned the shelves. How could I choose my *ujamaa* carving? My eye fell on a tall, cylindrical piece: eight figures, each one lifting a heavy burden, each leaning against another. This one had my name on it! I bought the statue under my arm and entered the world of *ujamaa*, of familyhood.

ood, of community African-style. In Tanzania, it is common knowledge that you can't be human alone, only in community. Relationships are all-important. When people meet, they spend time greeting another though they may be ill-acquainted and may have rarely spoken. "How are you? How is your family? Your husband? How are your children? Are the crops growing?" One simply does not get down to the business at hand without these crucial questions! No matter how urgent the urgency, there is always time to speak together. Conversations are often punctuated with "*Pole sana!*" an empathetic expression indicating the listener shares the speaker's feelings, be they anger, joy or sorrow.

Health means being whole, having healthy relationships. "With whom are your relationships broken?" is the first question asked when one is ill. Rituals of reconciliation are common. Old men may trade blankets, young women exchange suckling children for a time. Elders may cut

their wrists and share blood. Eating together ritualizes reconciliation.

The meal is a communal event, as people gather around a heaping bowl of *ugali*, a thick maize porridge, pull off chunks and dip them into a common stew pot. In earlier times, whole villages would gather for the evening meal, with each family providing a dish, a Tanzanian version of potluck.

As I traveled through the countryside and made discoveries about familyhood in Tanzania, I frequently unwrapped my ujamaa statue to enjoy its beauty. The carving soon took on new meaning for me as a symbol of Christian community: all the saints of God who comfort, strengthen, inform, guide, and challenge me. The figures came to represent my "meditative council" of forebears, contemporaries, people I've met and

In Tanzania, it is common knowledge that you can't be human alone.

A day at the Usa River market near Arusha, Tanzania.





A woman plaits the hair of a young friend.

those I've never seen, whose lives and words send me forth with the gospel.

I can't be human alone! How I know that truth in the depths of my being. If left entirely to myself, even my finest ideas become skewed. I need my brothers and sisters to round off my rough edges, to bring balance to my life and work, to add their gifts and ideas to mine. Together we are a tapestry of rich color and design.

God created us to be in community, to be in relationship. We can do together what we cannot possibly do separately! Imagine the consequences if that vision caught the entire Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, caught each congregation, and every member!

We can do together what we cannot possibly do separately. We know the truth of that when we sing in a choir, play in an orchestra, participate in a drama. We know the truth of that when a group plans a gathering, completes a project, when a whole community responds to an emergency. We know the discipline and energy involved, and we know

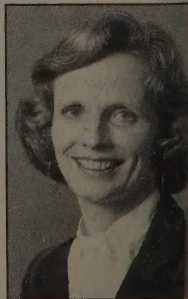
***God created us to be
in community, to be
in relationship.***

the joy of moving together, *bega bega*, "shoulder to shoulder," as Tanzanians say. God needs each us, and each of our congregations and God needs us together, enabling mission across the United States and around the globe.

I carry my ujamaa statue with me when I travel. Sometimes I actually pack it up and take it to a workshop to share it with others, but always carry it in my heart. I count on the wisdom, the insight, the vision, the love of those whose lives touch and guide me as I seek to be faithful, all of us lifting and leaning together.

It is in the Eucharist that I know most fully the familyhood of which I speak. There I am made whole, made healthy, fully reconciled to God and everlastingly connected to the saints of all times and places, ujamaa to its fullest, from Makumira, Minnesota to Malaysia! ■

Lynda M. Tidemann has been an elementary-level teacher; a missionary in Guyana, South America; an associate in ministry at Global Dei Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. She serves the ELCA Division for Global Mission as program director for East Africa and the Caribbean.



Community

onna Hacker Smith

As a child, I loved to write my address in the longest possible form, listing my name, street address, city, state, nation, planet, galaxy, and, finally, "the universe." Perhaps you did the same. From childhood we define the boundaries of our world from our own individual perspective. The entire world revolves around us.

I was introduced to a different world and a different frame of reference when, as a young adult, I moved to Japan and served as a single-term lay missionary. The Japanese version of self-understanding, grounded in community identity, impressed itself on me quickly. In Japanese culture, one is identified in terms of one's group, whether that group is school, employer or family.

Even in the ritual of self-introduction (called *jikoshokai* in Japanese), I learned to identify myself by means of my communities: school, church and neighborhood. To this day, when I tell anyone familiar with Japan that I lived in Kumamoto, I feel compelled to offer a sample of the local dialect (*Kumamoto ben*) to verify my community identity. Shared memories of the famous sights of the city, the nearby Lutheran mission camp, and the unforgettable presence of Mount Aso—the active volcano near Kumamoto that is part of the city's identity—give me a warm sense of belonging.

Moments of true community identity stay in our memory and shape who we are. I recall the Sunday when I headed home to my small apartment after a full

evening of worship and activities at Kumamoto Lutheran Church. I was tired enough to relish the quiet of my cozy, messy dwelling. I was startled to find the apartment door unlocked, and to hear the sound of many young voices. "Oh my!" I thought, "I haven't the energy for an afternoon of youth group!"

The Japanese version of self-understanding is grounded in community identity.





But as I entered my little apartment, I was greeted by a pleasant bustle. Two of the girls from our youth group were at work in the kitchen preparing a big pot of *yakisoba*, my favorite noodle dish. The boys had their end of things well in hand: bowls and chopsticks ready for everyone, space heaters fired up, and the apartment warm and welcoming. My seasonal irritability quickly gave way to the joy of Christian community.

Does community shape us, or do we shape our community? I was brought up to believe in the power of the individual.

Does community shape us,
or do we shape our community?

the difference that I, or any other individual, could make in the community and, in turn, in the world. I have learned to know the difference between being assertive and being

aggressive. And I have been taught how to use that skill to maintain a strong individual presence within my community context. It's a good feeling to be recognized and affirmed for individual skills, strengths, and achievements. No one, including me, ever wants to feel like a mere "cog in the wheel."

But I learned a valuable lesson in Japan. It was quite a challenge to live up to the identity I had as a member of a community. There is a great feeling that comes with being identified as a teacher at Kyushu Gakuin Lutheran High School, or as a Lutheran missionary, or as a resident of Kumamoto, Japan. While the expectations of others, based on the groups to which I belonged, were sometimes high, they helped me to learn not only *who* I am, but *whose* I am.

Does community shape us, or do we shape community? My answer at this point in my faith journey is, Yes! We shape community, it's true—otherwise all church communities would be identical. And, if we are open and faithful, community shapes us. When I am truly mindful of my community identity, I seek to present myself as a member of the body of Christ in every situation—sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly. Being a part of that body creates high expectations. The sense of community and belonging that it provides is unsurpassed in warmth and offers encouragement to every member. ■



The Rev. Donna Hacker Smith is pastor at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Freeport, Illinois.

The American Bible Society and Community

Carole L. Kraemer

ryle Adams of Ravenna, New York, received a call at 3 A.M. from Gladys, a new friend. "I have AIDS," she said, "And I want to drive into the river."

Reaching for her American Bible Society scripture booklet, Mrs. Adams responded by telling her that nothing can separate you from the love of God" (Romans 8:38).

Encouraged, Gladys shed some tears and fears. She promised to pick up food and a scripture booklet on her way to work. The booklet contained the verse, "For this reason we never become discouraged. Even though our physical being is gradually

decaying, yet our spiritual being is renewed day after day" (1 Corinthians 4:16, today's English Version).

A few months later Gladys said the booklet was her constant companion. After Gladys' death, her mother reported that "Nothing Can Separate Us From the Love of God" was inscribed on Gladys' gravestone. Her mother handed Mrs. Adams a gift from Gladys, an envelope with five crisp

\$20-dollar bills. Mrs. Adams made a donation to the American Bible Society in memory of Gladys.

The American Bible Society (ABS) is a pandenominational 300,000-member society. As a publisher, the American Bible Society prints, promotes and distributes Bibles throughout the United States, reaching special groups of people in formats appropriate to them. Using selected direct quotations, the ABS Scripture booklets target their message for many with special needs, such as those who are sick, elderly, blind, in prison,



As word quickly spread throughout the Russian parliament building, throngs of people lined up for the Scriptures.

lonely, addicted, homeless, and those considering suicide—as well as migrant workers, singles, newlyweds, athletes. The ABS publishes translation guides, exegesis (interpretation) resources, and EveryWord,



computer software for retrieving Scripture texts.



Young people at the 1991 ELCA Youth Gathering in Dallas, Texas, reviewed American Bible Society Scripture materials.

For 175 years the ABS has adhered to its mission: to provide the Scriptures, without comment, to all people, affordably, in languages they understand. Along with the multid denominational United Bible Society of Redding, England, the ABS has distributed over 5 billion scripture portions in 1,946 languages. This serves 90 percent of the world's population but still falls short of covering the world's estimated 5,000 languages. It does all this on a current budget of \$50 million, supported by members, sales and endowments—and by volunteers.

Volunteers often call attention to, and gain support for, the ABS by cap-

italizing on a personal interest and linking it to the ABS. Such volunteer efforts have been as diverse as a 1,600-mile cycling tour of the East Coast; a 100,000-volume sale of books gathered throughout New England; sales of refurbished toys collected in special barrels at shopping malls; and Scripture Card ve-

es pasted into recycled greeting cards and distributed to shut-ins.

This 175th anniversary year, which ended in May 1992, has been marked by publication of the refreshing, comprehensible Contemporary English Version (CEV) of the New Testament, meticulously translated from the Greek. Another achievement was the rapid delivery of 300,000 Today's English Version Bibles in response to a Pentagon call for small Bibles with camouflage print cover, complete

with Desert Storm U.S. Central Command and U.S. military branch seals. (See also the devotion, on page 48 of this issue, for the ABS anniversary song, which was commissioned for the celebration and written by a Lutheran musician.—ED.)

Anniversary challenges include publishing an Old Testament Contemporary English Version (available in 1996); a contemporary Navaho Bible; an illustrated CEV New Testament (available this spring), and the "Gifts of Love" campaign to send 30 million Bibles this year to Russia and Eastern Europe.

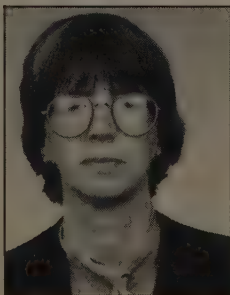
Every contributor of \$3 or more can follow these activities in

American Bible Society Record, the second-oldest continuously published magazine in the United States (after *The New England Journal of Medicine*).

The American Bible Society offers ways for communities to come together to serve other communities through the Word of God. In keeping with the ABS 175th anniversary theme "The Word of God, Alive and Active" (Hebrews 4:12, Today's English Version), Faye Flemister encourages potential volunteers to tap into existing organizations and communities. Flemister, the ABS director for volunteers, says, "It just takes a bit of planning to add Scripture cards to trays at luncheon meetings. That's volunteering."

Adeline Schubert, an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America member who is a sunflower and wheat farmer from Bowdon, North Dakota, knows that through her ABS "Gifts of Love" talks, Bibles will reach their Russian destination. She believes God is using her to minister. She distributes scripture booklets in her own community, saying, "If you aren't doing something, you're part of the problem. You don't know who will be touched." ■

Carol L. Kraemer, Washington, D.C., and New York City, is a communications consultant with expertise in publishing and international relations. A graduate of Tulane University, she has also been a foreign service officer with the U.S. Department of State.



Volunteers and the ABS

The American Bible Society volunteers attend various religious denominational meetings and conventions, operate Scripture Courtesy Centers at fairs and public gatherings, or coordinate congregational activities like Bible Sunday each November.

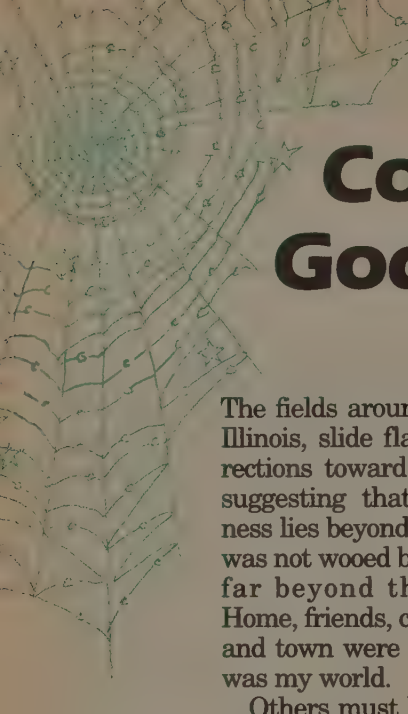
The ABS holds volunteer training sessions 10 times a year, in which volunteers receive 24 hours of instruction. "Many Lutherans participate," reports ABS's Faye Flemister, "but we don't identify people by denomination. Our volunteers are superior. The love they have for God's word gives them so much energy."

It was, in fact, an 84-year-old longtime ABS volunteer, Dorothy Haas of Minneapolis, who first suggested to *Lutheran Woman Today* that an article on the society and its work appear in this anniversary year. Years ago Haas was the first volunteer coordinator of the ABS, working out of its New York City office. (Many will remember Haas from her leadership of Lutheran women's organizations in the 1950s and 60s).

To find out more about the volunteer program, contact Faye Flemister, Director of Volunteers, The American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023 or call 212/408-1391.

A catalog of ABS publications, including the popular Scripture Cards and Daily Bible Reading Guides, is available from the same address.

—CK



Cosmic Community: God's Creation

Richard A. Swanson

The fields around Sycamore, Illinois, slide flatly in all directions toward the horizon, suggesting that only sameness lies beyond. As a child, I was not wooed by adventures far beyond those fields. Home, friends, church, school and town were enough. This was my world.

Others must have felt as I did. The month after I graduated from high school and the Korean "conflict" began, *Life* magazine called my town the "buckle of the fast-vanishing isolationist belt in America."

The facts of life were all in place then. *Men*: powerful leaders. *Women*: dependable helpers. *God*: in his heavens, over all and all over. *Jesus*: watcher of the heart. *Church*: Christian, Lutheran, Swedish (and not necessarily in that order). And *the earth*: an it, a thing, endlessly usable (and certainly not spelled with a capital E!)

But there were roads that led away from Sycamore, and I followed one of them to Augustana College by the mighty Mississippi, sure that I was on a four-year circle

tour that would bring me home again. So far, 41 years later, that homecoming hasn't happened.

I am sure that Sycamore is now a ripe prospect for Chicago suburbanhood, but it has changed. Where once John Deere, Case, and Farmall tractors could be seen parked right on the main street, now Buicks, BMWs, and Toyotas now fill the spaces. The world or at least Cable News Network's view of it, is as close to Sycamore as it is to Baghdad.

I'm even surer that I have changed. I've noticed that loving a man is about the same sized deal as a woman being a woman. I wince when I hear God always being dressed and addressed as a man. The Earth (I now give it a capital E) has become *us* rather than *it*, *home* rather than *this*. And when theologian Sarah McFague describes us Christians in her recent book, *Models of God*, as "mothers and fathers . . . lovers . . . co-creators, and friends" of the Earth, I recognize that gift for myself.

God is calling us today to be stewards of a community at home, if you will, that is not

ing short of cosmic. We are being called from our small self-made worlds to the real world, Christ's world, in which everything and everyone are connected with wondrous complication. It is as if we're hearing for the first time Paul's description of God, Christ, and creation in his letter to the Colossians: Christ is exactly like God, who cannot be seen. He is the first-born Son, superior to all creation. . . . All things were created by God's Son, and everything was made for him. God's Son was before all else, and by him everything is held together. He is the head of his body, which is the church" (Colossians 1:15-18a, Contemporary English Version).

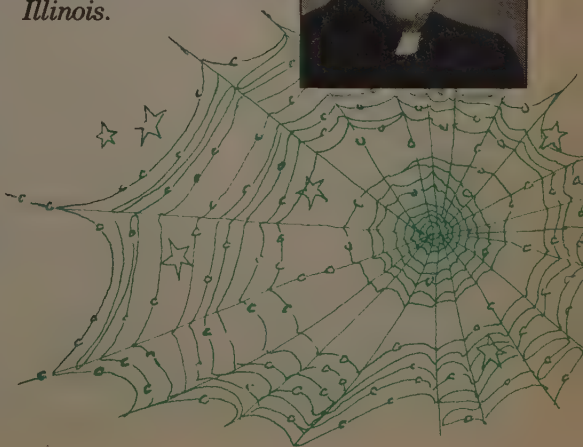
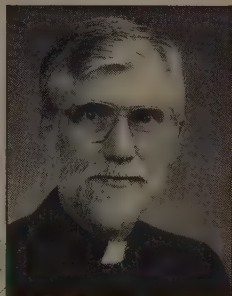
Like the seamless robe worn by Jesus, creation, it turns out, a single piece. The oneness of all God's creation haunts and indicts me. Chauvinism displayed, plastic foam discarded, propellants sprayed, energy wasted: I am guilty. No longer is my unfulness a private affair between myself and God. Real sin today is public, cosmic. Real sin is whatever seeks to destroy the seamless fabric of God's creation: judging, dividing, exploiting, ignoring, polluting, acquiring, abusing.

As always, the wages of sin is death, and the wages of cosmic sin is cosmic death. In fact, some say the cosmos is dying. If Earth and its spheres are any sign, then there is truth in our worst

fear. A threatened and threatening atmosphere and biosphere, disappearing rain forests and appearing wastelands, rising mountain ranges of garbage . . . all are my/our doing. There is good reason not only for guilt, but for despair.

Yet, if our sin grown cosmic is the bad news, the good news is that God's forgiving love has, *from the beginning*, been equally cosmic. Our penitence and conversion still find, in God's forgiveness, the vocation of new life as co-rovers with God of all creation. Created to be the Earth's responsible consciousness, we can yet be faithful, forgiven stewards of the community that God has given us and all that is: A community that is ours, to make or break. ■

Vitally interested in environment and ecology, Richard Swanson is dean of college ministries and campus pastor at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois.



"So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you."

John 13:14-15, NRSV

Beautiful Feet

Ruth B. Ressmeyer

Maundy Thursday comes again, with its lesson of Jesus washing his disciples' feet. As I hear the story read from John 13, a memory stirs of my 80-year-old mother.

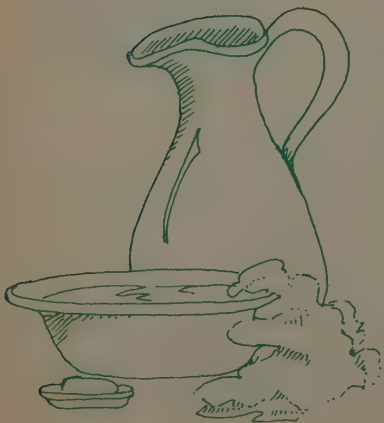
After my father died, mother, though not in the best of health, undertook to visit her five living children—widely scattered in different states—and two sisters. When she came to visit us she could hardly walk because of severe foot pain. Prolonged fatigue, poor circulation, and shoe pressure coupled with some genetically irregular bone structure were taking their toll.

As soon as possible, I made an appointment with a podiatrist, selected from the yellow pages. I can still see how gently he laid my mother's feet, first one, then the other, upon his lap. As he filed down her thickened toenails, some of the filings fell haplessly onto his trousers. I was moved by the tender touch with which he handled the aching, rather unlovely feet of this elderly woman.

That same day I drove mother to a shoe store recommended by the podiatrist. As we entered, a middle-aged man ran to meet us. "I'm the owner here, and I only wait upon people who are obviously in great pain," he explained.

Carefully he measured mother's feet and studied her problems. Soon she walked out as if on air, wearing one of two new pairs of special shoes.

Mother died less than three months later, the shoes still almost new. I've never forgotten the unexpected, tangible compassion shown us twice that day by two strangers, who followed in Jesus' Maundy Thursday footsteps. ■



Ruth Ressmeyer, an associate in ministry, is a member of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, in Greenpark (Long Island), New York.

Grace-full Communication

Donald F. Hetzler

ars ago Mrs. Peterson, a parish-er, remarked to e, her eyes ablaze, his congregation fers from ingrown nversation." On the ot I learned that r little flock, small it was, needed a wsletter.

Her remark also ught me what is sic to community: ople need to know, ed to be told, need have opportunity respond, and need exchange ideas. In ort, a community ust communicate.

grown conversation warts community, cause information n't shared and terchange is evented among ople who expect the ght to participate.

That's what mmunication is out—give and take nong a group, ristians included. hat difference does ristian faith make mmunication?

What difference does Christian faith make to communication?

Here are some ideas.

First, and most important, communication and the desire to communicate are gifts of God's grace. The "how" of writing, speaking and broadcasting effectively is only a fraction of the significant intersection between faith and communication.

If communication were only a matter of clarity, style and

completeness, Christians would not have such concerns about mastering it. But our God-given ability to express ourselves brings with it a deeper notion of grace.

Furthermore, we aren't solitary creatures. God has created us to live in community. We need and depend on others. And communication is necessary to healthy community, just as Mrs. Peterson contended.

Note, too, that God communicates. God has called together a particular community and called them his people. God has made himself known through word and sacrament, elements that make up and maintain that family. So we communicate in many ways—linking together the people of God through a parish newsletter, a circle Bible study

group, or the reception of holy communion with co-believers.

No wonder that a “breakdown in communication” gets the blame for internal ruptures in families and communities. Instances of failure to inform or opportunities to misinform, misconstrue, mislead or misunderstand are unfortunately common and loaded with explosive potential. Everybody—children included—has experienced disappointment, embarrassment, sorrow, betrayal and anger because of words heard, seen or read. Likewise, words have given us moments of elation, surprise, anticipation, amazement and happiness.

The knowing of news, whether good news or bad, has an impact on community. And often *not knowing* carries a stronger negative impact, especially if the news withheld is bad news.

Communication among Christians should reflect God’s communication with us. Consequently,

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faith tells us that communication should be clear, honest and useful. Such faithful speech or writing builds up the community, promotes friendship and, above all, expresses care—care for others, for truth and for language. Here are a few guidelines that served me well in my career as a communicator in the church.



TAKE CARE TO BE CLEAR. Clarity begins with respect for the Word of God and for the words of our

language. Since many words have more than one meaning, being clear as we use words requires some precision, first in thought, then in speech.

Think, for instance, of the difference in value between an *old* car and an *antique* car. Abraham Lincoln is said to have accused an opponent of trying to convince voters that a horse chestnut is the same as a chestnut horse. Once telephoned a newspaper with the title of a program on the topic “Euthanasia.” The paper announced the topic as “Youth in Asia.”



TAKE CARE TO BE HONEST.

This means that our conversation be truthful, not merely credible. Sadly, many statements can be credible or believable without being honest. Manipulation of words can make a bad thing appear acceptable, or a wrong thing right. The emphasis in recent political campaigns on “damage control,”

in doctors" and
"image consultants"
underscores the many
ways communication
can be misleading.

TAKE CARE TO MAKE
LANGUAGE USEFUL.
I learned lately to
recognize parish
announcements
printed in the
bulletin—as well as
those given orally—as
evidence of caring for
the people of God.
Each communication
builds up the commu-
nity in many ways. In
this light even
ordinary announce-
ments become the
grammar of grace,
expressing the
concerns of the
people. Perhaps they
are an anticipatory
comment on our song
at thanksgiving,
thank the Lord and
sing his praise; tell
everyone what he has
done" (*Lutheran Book
Worship*, page 72).

TAKE CARE TO AVOID
UNDUE NOVELTY.
It is not really neces-
sary to strive for
communication that
is clever, or unusual
or unique. For
instance, I once
overheard a sales-

**Take care
to be clear,
to be honest,
to make
language
useful, to
avoid undue
novelty.**

woman describe the
satin sheen of a dress
she was showing with
these words: "It
shimmerizes." That's
novelty gone a bit too
far for my ears.

So let us take care
of our language. It is
a living language that
changes and grows
naturally as people
use it. And we should
treat it as any living
gift from God.

Our communica-
tion needs to be
flavored with a
quality of grace so our
communities may be
blessed, not
destroyed. Civility
and candor are
already in short
supply in this world.

Our language
deserves respect just
as we are respectful
of persons. Christians
know a gracious Lord
who told stories,
taught and often
suffered the conse-
quences of forthright
communication. Jesus
communicated with
love, respect and
truthfulness. It is a
rare gift to be able to
communicate freely
and to, among other
things, "tell everyone
what he has done." ■

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Illinois, is past execu-
tive director of the
Associated Church
Press. A recently
retired Evangelical
Lutheran Church in
America clergyman,
he lives with his wife
Marilyn, a teacher,
and enjoys refur-
bishing their 140-
year-old house and
painting watercolors.*



A God Who Weeps, A God Who Laughs

Terence E. Fretheim

A true community has been defined as a place where you laugh with those who laugh and weep with those who weep. Does God belong to such communities? Or, does God stand outside in unaffected isolation?

God is certainly present and active in the communities of which we are a part. The Scriptures—both Old Testament and New—say even more: God chooses to be so engaged in the life of our communities that God is deeply affected by what happens there—or doesn't happen. The Old Testament is particularly vocal about both God's thoughts and feelings on the human situation. God responds to people and situations with action and passion. The Bible speaks of a God who suffers: because of us, with us, and for us.

God suffers because of us.

God suffers because people reject him and violate their relationship with God. Some Bible

texts speak of God as the Holy One whose heart is grieved: "How often they . . . grieved him in the desert!" (Psalm 78:40*). Or "they . . . grieved his holy spirit . . ." (Isaiah 63:10). When God saw the extent of human wickedness, "it grieved him to his heart" (Genesis 6:6).

Ephesians picks up this theme and admonishes Christians: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God . . ." (4:30). A Lenten hymn says it well: "Your heart, O God, is grieved, we know, By ev'ry evil, ev'ry woe. . . ." (*Lutheran Book of Worship* 96).

Jeremiah often speaks laments from God to Israel. For example: ". . . I thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me" (3:19b). Isaiah 65:1b is an especially poignant divine lament: "I said, 'Here I am, here I am,' to a nation that did not call on my name." Hosea 11:1-9 portrays God as a parent who is in agony over a prodigal child.

These laments are echoed in Jesus' own words in Matthew 23:37: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem. . . . How often have I desired to gather your children together

as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

It is important to note that God suffers *as God*, not as a human being. God does not become callous or embittered by suffering. God is able to work with the suffering to bring about good. God's saving will never wavers. God's faithfulness never ceases. God's steadfast love endures forever.

God suffers with us.

God enters into our suffering situations and makes them his own. "I have observed the misery of my people . . . I have heard their cry. . . . I know [experience] their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them" (Exodus 3:7-8a). God enters into human sufferings so deeply that he personally experiences what people are having to endure.

In Jeremiah 9:17-18, God includes himself among the mourning women, "... that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids flow with water" (see also Jeremiah 31:20). This Godly lamenting extends to the suffering of non-Israelites (Jeremiah 48:30-36) and even to the distress of the fields and animals (Jeremiah 9:10). God knows the sufferings of our world *from the inside*, and that means our suffering will never have the last word.

Nowhere is this truth more evident than in the suffering of Jesus, whose heart reveals the heart of God. In both Old and

New Testaments we can see that God is not stymied or immobilized by suffering; rather God can use suffering to bring goodness and blessing out of the worst of situations.

God suffers for us.

At the center of the Christian faith is the confession that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate" for us. In fact the Old Testament prepares the way for this word when it speaks of a God who gives of self on behalf of the world. God chooses to bear our sins rather than deal with us on strictly legal terms: "... You have burdened me with your sins. . . . I, I am He who blots out your transgressions *for my own sake*" (Isaiah 43:24-25, emphasis added).

In Isaiah 42:14, God's suffering, portrayed in terms of a woman's labor pains, brings about a new creation of Israel beyond destruction: "I [God] will cry out like a woman in labor, I will gasp and pant." Only by God personally entering a life-and-death situation can it be broken open *from the inside*. This divine activity anticipates the suffering and death of Jesus, in whom God was reconciling the world to himself.

The God who suffers is also the God who rejoices.

Proverbs 8:31 speaks of the wisdom of God "rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race." God "takes

pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love" (Psalm 147:11). God is one who "will rejoice over you with gladness . . . renew you in his love . . . exult over you with loud singing . . ." (Zephaniah 3:17). ". . . As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Isaiah 62:5b). The "joy in heaven" of Luke 15:7 suggests a vibrant earthly/heavenly community in which God fully participates.

During his lifetime, Jesus responded with both sorrow and joy as he moved among the people and shared in their community life. In so doing, he was mirroring the very heart of God.

If we, too, would truly live in

community, that will mean learning to weep and laugh with others. Even more, it will mean testifying to God's own suffering, most supremely in Jesus, so that one day all our tears will be wiped away and joy alone will fill the air (Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:4). ■

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**Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.*

REVIEW

The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective

by Terence E. Fretheim

(Fortress Press, 1984, fourth printing 1991; \$12.95).

Terence Fretheim writes, "All too often the sole focus of the ministry of the church has been on whether one believes in God. Insufficient attention has been given to the kind of God in whom one believes, often with disastrous results." Fretheim broadens our understanding of God by focusing on divine suffering. He examines various metaphors, or images, of God in the Old Testament.

Fretheim asserts that the

Old Testament God is not solely a God of wrath and judgment, but a God who enters into the human situation and suffers along with humanity.

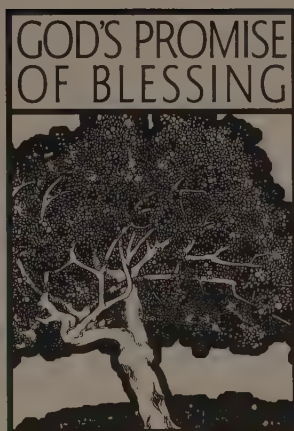
The book is an excellent resource for both clergy and laypeople: it is thought-provoking for those eager to gain a better understanding of God, especially in the midst of suffering.

*Monica Melanchthon
Chicago, Illinois*

Session 3

The Road to Glory

Judith A. VanOsdol-Hansen
Robert J. LaRiviere



Bible Basis: Matthew 14:1—15:39; 21:1-45; 26:1-68

Study Text: Matthew 26:1-68

Every human Jesus, wishing there were some other way, is obedient to the Father's will, even in the face of betrayal, abandonment, and humiliation. The Son of God "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. . . . On the third day he rose again." These words of the Apostles' Creed were the foundation of faith on which the church of Jesus Christ began. Today, they remain the center of our proclamation and the source of our strength.

During the seasons of Lent and Easter we will travel the road of Jesus' passion and resurrection. In a world where people still demand signs and "desire wisdom," we will seek blessing in the stumbling block and "foolishness" of one who by death becomes the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:22-24).



Opening Prayer

Thank you, Lord, that you did not withdraw your love from the disciples who deserted you. Forgive us when our loyalty to you is weak. With the assurance of your forgiveness, strengthen us to forgive others and to witness to you. Amen.

Understanding the Word

Read Matthew 26:1-5. As we read how Jesus is betrayed by one who was with him from the beginning, abandoned by the other 11, and dragged from one court to another, the enemy appears to be in control. Jesus, who once taught with authority and worked miracles, now seems unable to save himself, or to keep even his closest followers loyal.

No one could force this moment to take place before Jesus finished all his teachings (verse 1). Now, no one can keep Jesus from being “handed over to be crucified” (verse 2). The powers of this world are determined to silence him.

Read verses 6-13. Here we meet the only person in the passion narrative who assists Jesus in preparing for what he has to do. Ignoring the disciples’ protests, an unnamed woman pours expensive ointment on Jesus’ head. She is anointing him for burial. All four gospels have a version of this story (see Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:37-39; John 12:1-8).

This humble woman has no authority and little worth in the culture and tradition in which she lives. In a sense, you might say she stands for all those who, in the world’s eyes, seem of little worth or value.

Yet Jesus honors her with an eternal remembrance. The scene is almost a beatitude come to life. Blessed is this humble woman of faith, for she shall be remembered (Matthew 26:13). In the same way, the gospel remembers all those who are “the least” and frees them for life.

1

Compare this woman’s act of love with the actions of the chief priests that precede it (verses 3-5); with Judas (verses 14-16); and with the disciples’ response (verses 8-9). How by her actions is she an example of “the light of the world” that Jesus describes in Matthew 5:14-16?

2



How often have you heard this story read or interpreted? Maybe not too often. What do you think the low profile of this powerful story might say about the church and what often gets

asized by the church? [Leaders should
that there is an error in the God's Prom-
f Blessing leader guide in the answer for
ion 2, found on page 14. The word in-
nt in the guide should read indignant.—

d 26:17-30. Jesus and the 12 disciples sit for a Passover meal, meal to commemorate how God brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt. This meal had been celebrated for hundreds of years. Now something new is happening. By offering himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, Christ replaces the blood of the lamb that saved God's people from death with his own blood. The bitter herbs that reminded people of their bondage in Egypt become the body of Christ.



3

do the disciples respond to Jesus' announcement of the betrayal (verse 22)? Why do you think that each disciple seeks reassurance that he will not be the betrayer?

In God makes a covenant (verse 28), God provides the means for fulfilling it. In this meal, Jesus' blood is offered "for many for forgiveness of sins." The blood of Christ is strength for life in this world, and a promise that we will share in the feast of the Father's kingdom (see verse 29).

Read verses 31-46. Peter's threefold denial of Jesus is infamous, but actually all the disciples deserted Jesus (verse 31). All but Peter in vowing to die with Jesus before they would ever deny him. See how verse 35 says it.

4



What would have to happen before the disciples could actually do what they have vowed—die for Jesus—as indeed, later on, some of them do? What does this suggest to us about our own commitment to follow Jesus? Jesus takes with him into the garden the same twelve disciples who witness his glorious trans-

Bible study

figuration (see 17:1-8). Three times he goes off to pray and asks them to stay awake; three times they fall asleep. Jesus is alone in his agony. Read 26:39 aloud. What does this verse suggest about how Christians ought to pray?

Read verses 47-56. Jesus' arrest is carried out amid great ironies: "A large crowd with swords and clubs" arrives, prepared to do battle (verse 47). The crowd has been gathered by the religious leaders of the people. Judas greets Jesus with a kiss. Jesus calls him "friend." The only act of physical violence is committed by one of Jesus' followers. Jesus rebukes the crowd for coming to him at night, as if he were "a bandit" (verse 55), instead of arresting him while he taught openly in the temple.

5

In the above scene, what kind of power does the crowd have? What kind of power does Jesus have (see verse 53) and why does he choose not to use it (see verse 54)? **Read John 10:17-18.** Reflect together on what these verses tell us about Jesus' use of power. Which kind of power do you think is greater—calling on "twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:53) or laying down life of one's own accord (John 10:18)?

Think about the powers and responsibilities God has given you. What can you learn from Jesus about how to use your powers?

6

Review Matthew 5:5. How can this verse apply to Jesus? **Read 26:57-68.** Jesus is brought before Caiaphas for his first trial. The problem at hand is a religious one, because blasphemy—the charge against Jesus—is punishable by death. Convinced that Jesus must die, the chief priests and the whole council see nothing wrong with seeking out false testimony (verse 59). These great religious leaders are willing to put a man to death on the basis of lies and misunderstandings!

7

people misunderstand what Jesus says at the temple (refer to verse 61; see also 40). Jesus is speaking of his own body, which will be destroyed and on the third day rise. But the people think he is speaking of their sacred place of worship. Why do you suppose Jesus speaks of his body as a "temple"? Why do you think Jesus remains silent in the face of his accusers? Look at verse 63.

8

Read verses 57-68. What does Jesus say that enrages his hearers? From their point of view, is the anger justified? Why or why not?



Interpreting the Word

The passion is God's answer to Jesus' prayer in the garden, that God's will be done. His disciples sleep through Jesus' agony in the garden and abandon him in the hour of his trial. Neither Jesus' followers nor his enemies can comprehend a "suffering servant" as the Messiah (see Isaiah 53:3-12). Yet, a woman, whose name we don't even know, had the wisdom and faith to anoint Jesus lavishly.

9

How does this woman's act in Matthew 26:6-13 prepare the reader for the story of Jesus' passion? Jesus understands the woman's gesture as an anointing for burial (verse 12). Do you think the woman also understands her role in this way? Explain your answer.

Jesus sees forgiveness as central to community and personal relationships. Knowing that not one of the 12 would stand by him at the end, he still offers them forgiveness in the new covenant through his body and blood. This is grace.



The disciples vow on their own strength and conviction never to deny Jesus; they do not yet understand the bread and wine their Lord has just given them. They are so certain of their own ability to remain faithful, they miss Jesus' promise to go before them into Galilee (verse 32).

Living the Word

Tradition is a good, even essential part of life. Sometimes, however, tradition can oppose the will of God. "We never did it that way before" is, in simple terms, part of what sent Jesus to the cross. He shook up comfortable people. He challenged rigid and controlling legalism. He sought peace. He called for repentance, the turning away from an old way of life in favor of a new way.

You may wish to begin developing a journal as you work your way through Matthew. If so, try making entries based on thoughts, ideas, activities that emerge from the "Living the Word" sections at the end of each study.

Take time to consider the ways of doing and saying things, and the ways of relating to people, that you inherited as part of your family or ethnic tradition. Consider the choices you make to say, or not to say, something; to go, or not to go, somewhere; to spend, or not to spend, time with someone.

Family, culture and traditions teach us how to live and cope with life. Sometimes, however, tradition gets in the way of growth. Think of one or two things about your own tradition and background that you might like to have changed in your own life. In prayer—alone or with others—ask God to guide you toward that change.

Looking Ahead

In Session 4 we will continue to study the passion in Matthew 26:69—27:61.

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What Will You Do?

Jackie Pine

What will you do when you find out I am infected with AIDS virus?

You know me. I've been a member of our congregation as many years as you are. I've taught your children and grandchildren in Sunday school and Bible school. I've been on the church council and served many offices in the congregation and woman's organization. When work needed to be done, I was there. I'm telling you all this to brag, but to establish the fact that I am just like you . . . a regular person.

Or, I *was* a regular person. I am feeling my personhood fading away as I become a bearer of another label: AIDS victim. Inside I am still the same me, but everywhere I turn, I'm faced with the reality of who I'll become to other people when my illness becomes public knowledge.

You don't know that I am HIV positive. I am not ill; I look the same as I always have. I have told only my family and a few close friends whose confidentiality I can trust. I must cope with the possibility of dying from this disease. I must also deal with what life will be like when everyone knows that I carry the AIDS virus.

This virus came into my life through a blood transfusion, given before testing became commonplace. It's rare to contract the virus this way; most get it through sexual contact or drug use. Neither my husband nor I have any of these other risk factors. The virus came into my life through the blood that saved my life.

I haven't told you of my illness for a variety of reasons, some completely unrelated to AIDS. If you knew about this, I'd lose my pres-

I want to be alive the day Bryant Gumbel tells America that a cure for AIDS has been found.

What Will You Do?

I want
to show
how
your
actions
and
words
can
affect
someone
like me.
I need
every
scrap of
hope I
can lay
my heart
on.

ent identity and become "the woman who is dying of AIDS."

I've seen how you act when you hear someone has cancer. You treat cancer as if it were a god, ascribing it total power. When the prayer chain is activated for the person with cancer, first you recite the litany of cancer's accomplishments: you know six people who died horrible deaths from this same type of cancer, and you have little hope for this victim. "Glory be to the cancer; it's going to get us all." After you have gone through this ritual, establishing the hopelessness of the situation, you agree to pray. If you view cancer with such hopelessness, AIDS would surely have an even more elaborate worship litany.

I don't like that attitude. No wonder so many people die from cancer; their friends tell them over and over in little ways that there is no hope. I have enough problems without being told, at this point, that there is no hope.

My doctor tells me that there is definitely hope for me in the forms of better treatment and eventually a cure. Statistics on death from AIDS over the past 10 years do not reflect the ben-

efit of the treatments that have become available in the past few years. New medications and ones still being tested are changing the outlook. Those who are HIV positive and persons with AIDS are living longer all the time. I want to be alive the day Bryant Gumbel tells America that a cure for AIDS has been found. I need courage to fight to stay healthy and encouragement to do so. I need frequent reminders of God's tremendous love for me, of God's marvelous promises to me, with me, and of his power to heal.

What I don't need are constant reminders of how horrible AIDS is and what a mountain I face. I am already bombarded with hopelessness. My cousin sent me a card when I found out I was HIV positive. It wasn't a "get well" card, it was a "thinking of you" card. The unsportsmanlike message: "You cannot win, *well*, and I am *thinking* how horrible this is." Instead of a message of encouragement, it seemed a sympathy note regarding my impending death. I may think I am being percritical to find fault in a simple piece of paper from Hallmark, but I want

ow how your actions and words can affect someone else. I need every scrap of hope I can lay my heart

You may say that I am depriving myself of your support by not telling you of my disease. It's a sad fact that if I were to tell only my fellow church members, the entire community would be well informed of my situation by rightfall. Even among you, my sisters in Christ, there will be more talking among ourselves about me than talking about me to God in prayer.

I already have a distinct picture of how you view the AIDS epidemic. During one of our Bible studies some time ago, you decided that AIDS is God's judgment on homosexuals. Just why God would choose to punish me for the actions of homosexuals isn't clear to me, but you probably have a theory on that, too. It seems odd that we hear a message of love and grace, but when it's translated into our lives, it comes out differently.

I'm as guilty as you on this point; I shudder to think of how many people I drive away by subtle things we do or say. I've been a Christian for decades, but our attitudes have pushed

me away. If I am offended, think how much easier it could be to offend someone on the fringe of the church, whose faith may be new and fragile.

So, just what will you do when you know I am HIV positive? There is virtually no chance of contracting the virus through casual contact: hugging, touching, using the same dishes. . . . Will you treat me differently anyway? Will you cringe if I admire your baby? Will I take my casserole home untouched from potluck suppers? What will you do? The Christ whose name we bear does not turn away, but accepts with outstretched arms.

I crave your love and support. I need the collective arms of my congregation around me, lifting me up in prayer for healing. I need you to encourage me in my faith and to help me have courage to face the future. I need you to laugh with me, share your faith with me, and help me to lead a normal life. But I wonder what you will do. . . . ■

The author is fighting for her life. Jackie Pine is a pseudonym.

**I need
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But I
wonder...**

Family Matters

Penny Long Marler

About a year ago, as I was traveling by plane, I was seated next to an 11-year-old boy. He told me about his school, hobbies, favorite books, and his "very brilliant" father, a professor. Though he didn't come right out and say it, I managed to piece together the fact that he no longer lived with his father.

After engaging me in a fairly sophisticated discussion about the Persian Gulf situation, he looked into my eyes and asked, "Do you know what I wish? I wish that I had known my grandfather. I think that if I knew him we would ride bikes and do sports and things together. I think that we would have been good friends."

When the plane landed he turned to me and said, "It's really been nice knowing you for an hour." This little boy, like many children today, measures his significant time with adults in minutes and hours.

The family structure in this country has changed dramatically since the "family fifties."

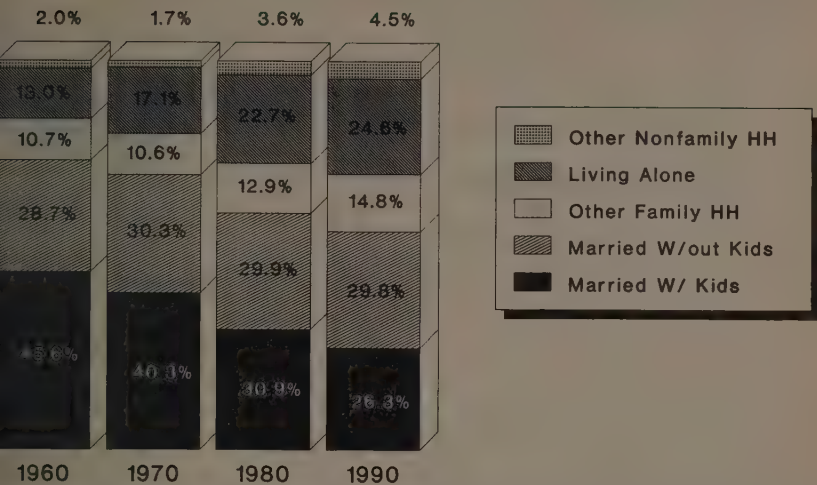
The Changing Family

About 15 years ago, sociologist Peter Berger commented in his book *From Max Weber to Postmodernism: Excursions in Modern Society, Politics and Religion* (Basic Books, 1977) that the church and the family were the remaining "mediating structures" for community in the modern world. In a highly mobile, largely impersonal urban society, the intimate relational ties once provided by close neighbors and extended family had virtually disappeared. Indeed, it seemed that the traditional or nuclear family and the local church were the only places left where persons of diverse ages and life stages met regularly for worship, work, and nurture. Fifteen years later, is the family still an effective "haven in a heartless world"?

The family structure in this country has changed dramatically since the "family fifties." Let me briefly summarize these changes:

The traditional family is no longer the norm. At the close of the fifties almost half of all households consisted of married couples with children. By 1990, a little over a quarter were made up of two parents and their children—almost a 20 percentage point decline in 30 years. While the traditional family is clearly not the sociological norm, many Americans still contend that traditional family values *ought* to be the standard. This perspective is tinged with nostalgia for "the way things used to be."

The Changing Structure of Households in the United States



Data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Household and Family Characteristics: March 1990 and 1989," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 447, Figure 1, and from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Household and Family Characteristics: March, 1960," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 106.

The traditional family is smaller. The average number of children per family has dropped from 2.34 in 1960 to 1.81 in 1988. At the same time, the natural webs of intimate social relationships are limited. With the breakdown of the extended family, cross-generational relationships develop less frequently.

The traditional family is fragmented. The shrinking web of family life is shaken by a host of other demographic trends. In her article, "America's Children: Mixed Prospects" (*Population Bulletin*, 45, 1990), Suzanne Bianchi noted major increases in mothers working outside the home, in the rate of divorce, and in the number of unmarried mothers.

Since 1960, the number of working mothers with preschool children has doubled; the number of working mothers with children 6 to 17 is

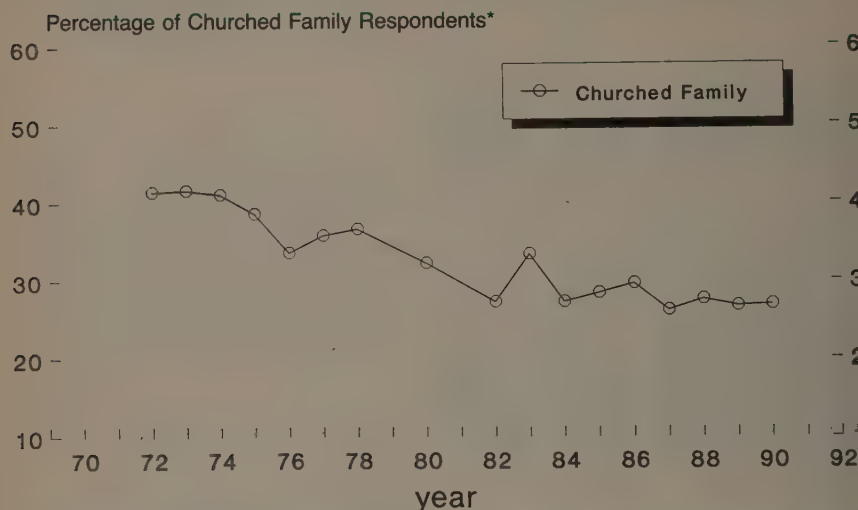
about one-and-a-half times larger. Time with children is at a premium in dual-worker families, according to a recent study.¹

In addition, separation, divorce, and remarriage are more common. Between 1950 and 1981, divorces increased from 385,000 to 1.2 million annually and the divorce rate more than doubled. Since 1981, the divorce rate has leveled, though remaining high. Family relationships must be increasingly resilient to endure the strains of marital conflict, breakup, and new family configurations.

A final trend is a marked increase in the number of children born to unmarried mothers. In 1960, one in 20 births was to an unmarried mother. By 1987, the statistic was one in four.

¹Steven Nock and Paul Kingston, "Time with Children: The Impact of Couples' Work-Time Commitments," *Social Forces*, 67 (1988): 59-85.

Churched and Married with Children 1972–1990



*Protestant, married with children under 18 and attending church several times a year or more from a nationwide random sampling.

Data are from Richard Niemi, John Mueller, and Tom Smith, *Trends in Public Opinion: A Compendium of Survey Data* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989).

Overall, a high divorce rate and an increase in out-of-wedlock births have resulted in a rise in single-parent families. Between 1960 and 1990, the percentage of children living with one parent—usually the mother—increased from 9 to 22 percent.

Family structure in America today takes many forms. The fragmented family has contributed to an entirely new American family portrait. This picture is varied and poses new challenges for community life. In sum, a snapshot of 100 present-day households would include: 26 traditional families; 29 childless couples (including empty-nesters); 25 “families of one” (mostly young professionals and widowed persons); 15 single-parent families; and 5 “families” of unrelated persons.

The Nostalgic Church

How has the church responded to this changing family structure? Recent research suggests that it has not risen to the challenge.

Fewer traditional families in the general population means fewer traditional families in the church. As the proportion of nuclear families in the population has declined, so has the percentage of “churched” married couples with children. Churches and families are also smaller. The net result? There is good evidence that the denominational decline can be traced to increased competition over the traditional family’s shrinking pie of the family household pie.

Nostalgia for the traditional family in the church has increased as the proportions have decreased. Clergy and laity alike bemoan the demise

large, active youth programs." Usually, the implication is that the church has somehow fallen down on the job. In truth, family-oriented programs were numerically successful in the fifties because there were, simply, proportionately more families. Some churches are doing no better or worse now. Our common nostalgia, it seems, is misplaced.

Scrambling to recapture the traditional family, many churches bypass growing numbers of nontraditional families. A 1986 study of congregations conducted by Hartford Seminary in Connecticut found that today's churches are made up of disproportionate numbers of empty-nesters and widowed persons. The American church is aging faster than the general population. Who's missing? Young, single adults (a growing cohort) and younger to middle-aged childless couples.

Strengthening the fragile webs of community life in the family and the church demands fresh approaches. First, the church must redefine the notion of family. Nostalgia for the fifties' family is not productive: we must face the realities of family change. Second, the church must discover ways to "make family." Programming that is responsive to the dilemma of the fragmented family must target the gaps in these fragile webs of social life. In fact, many of the "fragments" naturally go together. For instance, a fatherless 11-year-old might find love and nurture in relationship with a single professional or a retiree. A recent book, *The Church's Ministry with Families* (Hartford, 1990), by Diana Garland and Jane Pancoast, has many ideas for cross-generational programming in congregations.

Nostalgia for the traditional family in the church has increased as its proportions have decreased.

When ties of blood and marriage are fragmenting and changing, people search for other bases of intimate relating. The modern American may rightly ask: "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers and sisters?" In the Christian tradition, church ties transcend those of blood and marriage. The challenge today, then, is to be that kind of church: where each member is a brother- or sister-in-Christ. Paraphrasing my 11-year-old traveling companion, in Christ "I think that we would be good friends." And the best research still shows that we all need—and thrive on—risking and giving, mutually respectful of relationships. Whether in old or new forms, being a part of a family matters. ■

Penny Long Marler, Ph.D., is a faculty associate at Hartford Seminary's Center for Social and Religious Research, Hartford, Connecticut, where she teaches religion and society and is a consultant on parish planning to churches of many denominations. She is married to a minister of the United Church of Christ.

A Place Apart

Herb and Judy Gifford



Deaconess Community Chapel

For us the problem was time. Finding time, especially a time when both of us could go, was the real difficulty. We knew the experience would be beneficial, so finally we just went.

Even before we arrived, we began to feel that we were indeed going to a place apart. We were struck by the location. Gladwyne is so close to Philadelphia, yet the setting was quiet and serene. Trees everywhere. Away from busy streets and highways. Stately homes dotting the landscape.

We drove up the circular driveway and parked in front of a small sign that read simply "Entrance." In retrospect, the simplicity of the sign was a reflection of what we were about to experience. A sidewalk led us on a curving journey to a small door cut in the massive stonework of the house.

We entered a small foyer and walked up three steps to an office where we were greeted warmly. But even before we heard a human voice or saw a single person, we had a sense of warmth and welcome. What a gracious old house! We could see the great room with its dark, carved panelling. It was the kind of room most people know only from movie

Sister Louise was told of our arrival. From then until our departure she was never far away, yet she had the knack of not intruding on our privacy.

She told us of the house, its history, its construction, and she took us on a tour of many of its areas. She spoke of the paintings on the walls and the various works of art that grace the home.

Originally called *Skylands*, the house was built in 1928 at an ex-

imate cost of \$500,000 by Mr. and Mrs. William Wood. After a succession of owners, it was given by the family to the deaconesses for use as their community center.

As Sister Louise showed us to our room—the old master bedroom—she told us that the time we were spending in “A Place Apart” was ours. We could do with it as we wished. And we were also welcome to enter into the life of the community.

In our comfortably appointed bedroom we found two Bibles, some devotional books, a couple of general interest books, and a volume of short stories. There was a small black-and-white TV that seemed a nod in the direction of modern technology, but no, perhaps, a sign that one comes

The time we were spending in “A Place Apart” was ours: we could do with it as we wished.

are not to watch the world, but to take some time away from it. Each of us had brought a book, even though we knew the house had no libraries of close to 12,000 volumes. Our busy schedules do not allow us the luxury of reading at leisure. Perhaps in this place apart we could do just that. Following late afternoon worship, supper was served in the main din-

ing room. All meals are buffet-style, except meals for some of the retired sisters who have their own separate dining area near their primary-care rooms. The meal that night consisted of barley soup, lamb stew, salad, bread and cold cuts. Mealtime conversation was a treat. Dessert was a specialty of Pennsylvania Dutch country, shoofly pie.

Time is not a problem for the deaconess community; time is a friend. And it is personified by Old Ben, a big grandfather clock in the great room. The clock chimes every 15 minutes and strikes the hours. Old Ben is showing his age. Occasionally the chimes shake a bit and strike each other, producing a less-than-clear tone. But even if beset with age, he stands and does his duty. And the community responds by keeping a schedule that is on time, but never threatened by time.

After dinner the sisters went their own ways. Soon the great house seemed empty, but we had no sense of isolation. Lamps glowed in various places. The soft light aided the sense of serenity and stillness.

We sat with Sister Louise and talked about a variety of things. We asked who turns out the lights and what we should do if we wanted to stay up later than the rest of the house. She had an answer no matter what we asked. All of her answers accommodated our needs. It was a wonderful experience to be in such a place apart and to feel a part of the place.

We headed for the library and sat by the fireplace in the gentle light of two lamps. The room had a comfortable glow about it. We read in silence, soothed by our surroundings. Through a doorway we could see the great room. It was dark outside the

leaded glass windows, but never was there a sense of wanting to be anywhere else.

It was early (for us) when we headed for our room. The house was silent. Sleep was peaceful and restful.

The clock radio woke us the next morning so we could be ready for chapel. Worship consisted of a simple order of hymns, Scripture, and prayer. It centered on the needs of each other, the church and the world.

Breakfast, in the main dining room, allowed us to have whatever we wanted. We kept it simple: juice, cereal, toast and coffee.

That morning we learned more about the history of the deaconess community, its place in the church, its mission and some of the challenges it has. One of the real difficulties the deaconess community faces is that it is one of our church's best-kept secrets! The truth is that the community has a long and distinguished history and is able to be of great service to the church. Currently the deaconess community waits to have its future role in mission defined by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America study of ministry. "A Place Apart" helps others get to know ELCA deaconesses, their commitment to service, and their value in the life and mission of the church.

The sun was shining that morning of our stay, so although it was a cool day, we decided to walk around the 16-acre grounds. We picked up leaves, some strange to us. We discovered bushes loaded with berries of various colors. We looked up into the bright, cold, clear blue air and watched as an airplane silently traced a thin vapor trail from north to south. We walked around the buildings of the complex and mar-

velled at the architecture. We had sense not only of God's creation, but what we human beings have been able to create using the gifts of God.

It was time for a dinner of potatoes and baked potatoes, along

The Deaconess community is one of our church's best kept secrets

with salad and vegetables. Dessert was ice cream. Simple fare, yet elegant and satisfying.

We left that afternoon with some regret. Our busy schedule would not allow us any more time in this beautiful place; we consoled ourselves with the thought that we can return. And we will! ■



Herb and Judy Gifford live in Cassauqua, Pennsylvania. Herb is pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church and Judy is coordinator of the "Growing Congregations Emphasis" of the ELCA's Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. Judy served as convention manager for the Women of the ELCA convention held in Anaheim in 1990.



A Place Apart

The Deaconess Community of the ELCA, with more than 100 women, continues a ministry of service that began over a century ago. At present the community serves in the areas of health care, parish work, education, church music, administration and social services. Among those cared for by deaconesses are children and youth with special needs, the urban poor and the aging. These ministries take place throughout the ELCA and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

A deaconess is a woman who affirms that she is called by God through the church to serve others. Through their community, deaconesses experience a unique solidarity.

The Deaconess Community Center is located at 801 Merion Square Road, Gladwyne, Pennsylvania 19035. As part of their ministry, the deaconesses offer to share their gracious and peaceful home with persons who are in need of a place apart for personal retreat. The cost is nominal.

Surrounded by vast lawns and trees, the home is a replica of an English manor house. Here the deaconesses provide an unstructured environment for solitude and relaxation in comfortable rooms, library, and chapel. There is opportunity for companionship with residents at daily worship, meals and in conversation.

Small groups are also invited to use the facilities for workshops, spiritual retreats and other meetings. Contact "A Place Apart" at the Deaconess Community Center at the address above, or call (215) 642-8838 for further information. ■

—HG and JG

*"Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth."*
Matthew 5:5

The Shooting

Barbara Jurgensen

"Bob Moore got shot in the chest last night!" one of Claire Haines' students told her when she arrived to teach her 7th and 8th grade Sunday school class. Bob was a member of the class.

"Another gang shooting!" a second student exclaimed.

"He was riding his bike home from the Y," Bob's friend Lee added.

"He's gotta have a couple operations!" someone put in.

It was still hard for Claire, having grown up in a small Iowa town, to deal with the violence that was so much a part of the inner city she'd come to know.

After church, as she was getting into her car to go to the hospital, Lee asked if he could go with her.



As they rode along, she told how worried people were that Bob's gang might now try to strike back.

"We have to!" Lee insisted. "They can't get away with this!"

As Lee told of the baseball bat, broom handles and hockey sticks their gang had stored in his basement, Claire remembered that she had taught both Lee and Bob in the 5th and 6th grade class, then "moved up" with them to the 7th and 8th grade class. She wondered if their five years of Sunday school together had made any difference.

They reached the hospital room and found Bob looking pale while watching football on TV.

Lee wasted no time: "Bob, we got to plan how to get back at those guys."

"Hold it . . ." Claire cautioned.

"We gotta," Lee pounded his fist on the bed rail. "Or they'll think we're chicken and pick off more of us." He pulled a pencil and small notebook from his pocket.

Bob tightened his right hand into a fist. "Deep down I'd like to smack 'em all . . ."

"Then let's get at it!" Lee pushed his chair up close to Bob's bed.

Bob reached for the TV control and snapped off the game. Then he

"It was like Jesus
was standin' right here
with me, and I knew
that we shouldn't try
to get even."



ked directly at Lee. "Maybe Miss
Haines is right—'Hold it.' "

They were all very quiet.

Bob cleared his throat. "I know
how you feel. I feel that way, too. But
I've been thinkin' . . . I've had a lot of
time to think in here." A siren sound-
ed as an ambulance pulled up to the
hospital. "I was awake a lot last night
and I've gone over and over the whole
thing. I wanna waste whoever did
this. Part of me does, anyway. But
what good is that?"

"We'd be fighting for the honor of
the gang."

"So what's honor when someone
is lyin' here with a hole in his
chest? Doesn't make sense!"

Lee fell silent.

"Last night," Bob began slowly,
when they brought me in there was
another kid already here—11 years
old, with stab wounds. He said our
gang did it. So I'm probably the one
they shot to get even. Does it just
keep goin'?"

His mother was there and his lit-
tle brother, eight years old. And the
doctors said they didn't know if he'd
make it. His mom and his brother
were cryin'. One of my doctors left me
to work on him."

Bob blew his nose.

They worked and worked. . . .
They did everything they could. . . .
And then, with his mom and little
brother standing there, he died. . . ."

A siren wailed as another ambu-
lance came up the drive.

Then he went on: "I remember
when you made us memorize those
sayings of Jesus, Miss Haines. And
Jesus didn't say, 'Blessed are the vi-
olent.' He said, 'Blessed are the
meek—the gentle.' I didn't think
much of those sayings then—but I
did memorize 'em. Last night I found
myself sayin' that verse over and
over. Just like Jesus was standin'
right here with me!"

Claire looked at Bob, almost as if
she were seeing him for the first
time. Even though his family wasn't
interested in church, he had come to
Sunday school ever since he was a
small boy, by himself, and stayed for
the service.

"It was like Jesus was standin'
right here with me," Bob said again.
"And I knew that we shouldn't try to
get even. So tell the guys about the
kid."

Then he turned to Claire.

"And keep makin' the kids learn
those Bible verses." ■

*The Rev. Barbara Jurgensen served
an inner-city Chicago congregation
before becoming an assistant profes-
sor at Trinity Lutheran Seminary,
Columbus, Ohio. This is the third in
a series of stories based on the Beat-
itudes.*

Living Water

Morris O. Wee

When the woman of Samaria went to the well, she went to draw water. At the well she met Jesus, who spoke to her about "living water":

"Everyone who drinks of this [well] water will be thirsty again, but those who

drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14, NRSV). After her conversation with Jesus, the woman rushed back to the city to tell people about him. But she left her water jar behind (4:28).

Why would this woman, who came specifically for water, leave her water jar behind? Because she doesn't need it anymore. She has living water from Jesus, and she is not thirsty.

You and I carry empty jars, too, and look for water to drink. We thirst for love, for forgiveness; we thirst for life that endures. We, too, need the water that Jesus brings.

The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah speak of God as a "fountain of living water" that will make "streams in the desert" (Jeremiah 17:13; Isaiah 35:6). Jesus, too, is a fountain of living water. When the woman receives the water of Jesus, she will never thirst again: she can leave her water

Why would this
woman, who
came specifically for
water, leave her
water jar behind?

jar behind. And we needn't carry our jars around, looking for water, or whatever. Drink of the water Jesus—in Baptism, in the Word, in the Lord's Supper—and we will never thirst again.

Some years ago our neighbors at our summer cabin decided to enlarge their kitchen. They began by digging just outside the kitchen wall. Suddenly, a fountain of water sprang from the ground, flooding the yard and threatening to wash away the cabin's foundation. Eventually, the rushing artesian well was controlled and piped, directed the water away from the house toward the shore, where it washes noisily into the lake. Eight years now that earthly "living water" has been running, and the sound of it fills the air.

So it is for any of us who meet Jesus, the true living water. Jesus meets us and we tap into that life-giving water that springs in us, giving us with life and refreshment, and the sound of it fills our lives. We have the life-giving water. We, too, can leave our jar behind. ■

The Rev. Morris Wee of Northfield, Minnesota, is pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church.

Sarah's Letter

Barbara Keesler Lamborn



started with postcards. My husband and I were on an extended cycle trip last year, and every few days I sent my granddaughter Sarah a postcard so she could follow our progress. I learned when we got home that she treasured those postcards. They went to kindergarten with her in her backpack, to Sunday school in a little purse; and they went to bed with her under her pillow.

The messages on the postcards didn't seem important (although I did think some of them were quite clever). What was important was that the postcards had come from me, across the miles, to her in her family's very own mailbox.

In exchange for these treasures, Sarah decided to send me a letter. She told her mother what she would like to say, and together they sat at the dining-room table, working on the letter until it was just right. Sarah signed her name, sealed the envelope, put on the stamp, and to make the letter her own, she decorated the back of the envelope with stickers that had kittens' faces on them.

As they walked to the mailbox, Sarah's mother explained the U.S.

postal system in terms a five-year-old could understand. Sarah rose on her tiptoes, pulled down the lever, and the letter was mailed. When it arrived at my house a few days later, I called her up immediately. "Hi Sarah," I said. "How nice! I got a letter from you. It was in my mailbox today."

Very quietly she asked, "Did it have little kitty stickers all over the back of it?"

"Yes," I answered. "It did."

That was all she needed to know. She dropped the phone in her excitement. "It worked!" she cried. "Hey, Mommy, it worked! Grammy got my letter."

Sometimes it takes a child to help us appreciate the wonder of the everyday. Sarah's letter reminded me how God works through human institutions to hold us together in love. ■

Barbara Keesler Lamborn, Columbia, Maryland, is a free-lance writer, the mother of three and grandmother of six. Last year she and her husband bicycled 3450 miles from Los Angeles to Boston in six weeks.

The Breakthrough

Barbara Sande Dimmitt

The organist lifted her hands from the keys, and the eight-month-old son's guttural growls resonated in the silence of the large, half-empty church. "Relax," I admonished myself. "It probably doesn't sound as loud to other people." I rocked him in a futile effort to quiet the relentless, incomprehensible noises.

This was the first time I had attended church in three months since Aaron, born with Down syndrome, had been diagnosed as having infantile spasms. The neurologist was clinically detached when he told us that this particular kind of seizure disorder "could have adverse developmental consequences." The consequences, in this case, were that Aaron's awareness and ability to respond were disintegrating, and so was I.

Aaron's awareness and ability to respond were disintegrating, and so was I.

I clenched the church bulletin so tightly that my hands began to go numb. How could we reach Aaron if he kept retreating into a world that made no sense to us? No longer did his eyes follow suspended toys as we moved them from side to side, up and down. His response to music sounds was minimal and decreasing.

The pastor proceeded with the liturgy, and the people in surrounding pews spent mercifully little time glancing our way.

My husband and I had an appointment to talk to the neurologist the next day. At that time, we needed to decide whether or not to try a new and somewhat dangerous course of medication for Aaron. We had been told that there was only a slim chance of halting his seizures. There was no clear prognosis.

"Why did I come here?" I asked myself. "I can't even keep my mind on the service, much less feel any comfort." Aaron's growling droned in my ear.

The second hymn: thank goodness. I sang from deep in my body—maybe from deep in my soul. It felt good to make a loud noise, to use all of my breath and inhale fresh air. Aaron quieted. For some reason, music still held some

gic for him, a faint reflection of the pleasure it had given
n in the few months he had lived without the seizures.
Rocking, ever rocking, I began to separate the words of
pastor's sermon from the deep, mellow vibrations of
voice. He was speaking of Christ's prayer in the Garden
Gethsemane.

And Christ said, 'My father, if it be possible, let this cup
s from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt' "
Matthew 26:39, Revised Standard Version). The pastor
nt on with the sermon, but my mind halted, then re-
ed those words. My eyes, too long dry, filled with tears.
ere had I gotten the idea that it was wrong to pray for
thing but the strength to do one's best, to accept life's
allenges, to live one day at a time?

Quietly, painfully, joyfully, I wept in the assurance that
uld ask that my son not suffer. My hands transferred
plate during the offering; my lips automatically formed
words of the Lord's Prayer; the service proceeded, but
was focused elsewhere. Prayers for Aaron flowed
ough me, clear rivers of relief at being able to say at
t, "This I do not want. I will accept it if I must, but I
you to take it away."

The organist lifted her hands from the keys for the last
e. People rose, greeted each other, waited in line to
ke hands with the pastor. I sat, undisturbed, listening
he slow breathing of my sleeping child.

At last, my breathing matching Aaron's, I rose to thank
pastor for the only sentence of his sermon that I had
lly heard. One single quotation from the Bible had
rced the rigid barrier of my false courage, freeing me
ace the unknown more squarely, in better balance.

Two weeks later, the new medication halted Aaron's
zures, and he began his long, slow journey back to the
rld around him. ■

"This I do
not want. I will
accept it if I
must, but I
ask you to
take it away."

*Barbara Sande Dimmitt, her hus-
band, Michael, eight-year-old Aar-
and six-year-old Rachel live in
Grove, California. Aaron is now
active, mischievous boy who
communicates mainly by sign lan-
guage, and whose first clearly spo-
ken words were "Good hug." The
letter notes "the article describes
response to a sermon in 1984 by
Rev. William Rittberger at First
Lutheran Church in Albany, New
York."*



Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Groenewold

♦ **Baltic Lutherans face new challenges**

Now that the Baltic states of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia have achieved independence, Lutherans in those countries face a new beginning. In 1990 the number of children and adults who were baptized in Estonia was four times the number of Estonians born that year. There are few pastors, and many of them are beyond normal retirement age. Theological seminaries have just reopened. Educational, evangelism and social ministry programs all need development.

Eternal God, guide Baltic Christians as they deal with change in their lives and their churches.

♦ **ELCA display celebrates multicultural heritage**

"Our Multicultural Heritage," a traveling exhibit produced by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America churchwide archives, contains a wealth of information on the various ethnic and cultural groups that comprise the ELCA. The display contains 67 laminated panels with photographs and narrative descriptions to celebrate the church's diversity. The display is available (Code AV-5351) for two-week rental for \$35 from the ELCA Distribution Service (call 800/328-4648); the borrower pays the cost of return shipping.

Help us celebrate our differences, risen Savior.

♦ **Malaysians help train Bangladesh Lutheran**

Bishop Julius Paul of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malaysia met with the executive committee of the Bangladesh Lutheran Church to find ways Malaysian Lutherans could assist the Bangladesh church. Paul said the Malaysian Lutheran involvement with the Bangladesh church will enrich church life in Malaysia as well.

Radiant God, enable us to see that partnerships allow blessings to travel both ways.

♦ **North Dakota Lutherans give hope to Kurdish family**

In 1991 many Kurdish families fled Iraq in fear. Peace Lutheran Church in Fargo, North Dakota, worked with Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota and others in the community to furnish a house and provide food and clothing for one Kurdish refugee family.

Loving Lord, so much of your creation lives in violence and fear. Open our hearts to share.

Remember to add to your daily prayer list people and issues in local, national and international news. ■

Sonia C. Groenewold is features editor of The Lutheran.

MISSION:

Community

Love One Another

How do you define community? Most of us have come to think of community as that binds us together in our oneness: our ethnic or cultural heritage, our religion, our social and economic status, our likes and dislikes, where we live or where we work. Webster's defines *community* as "a group of people residing in the same locality under the same government, or a group having common interests."

As Christians baptized in Jesus Christ, we define community as a family of God. God gives us to one another in community and commands us to love one another.

Romans 12:10 instructs us to "love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor." 1 John 4:19-21 tells us "We love because he first loved us. Those who claim to love God, and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."

I am reminded of a line from a folk song that my family "adopted" when five children were very young. We were a celebrative family, making a festive occasion of every imaginable event. In moments of joy and

thanksgiving, in times of sadness and concern, we would always join hands, kneel in a circle of prayer and sing: "love one another, and bring each other home."

"Love one another
with mutual
affection; outdo one
another in showing
honor."

Romans 12:10

We are the family of God. We, too, are a celebrative family and should take every opportunity to celebrate the diversity of God's creation. We should also be able to name and claim one another as brothers and sisters, children of the same God and equal heirs to the kingdom. We should be willing to share the moments of joy and the moments of sadness by symbolically joining our hands and committing ourselves to love one another and bring each other home. ■

*Dolores Yancey
Director for Community
and Organizational
Development*

MISSION:

Action

Literacy Project Builds Community

COMMUNITY . . . the work of a literacy coordinator and a Synodical Women's Organization shows how it happens.

The project was titled "Idea-to-Reality: New Reader Books for Southeastern Iowa Rural Public Libraries." At a board meeting of the Southeastern Iowa Synodical Women's Organization the project was suggested and enthusiastically approved: one quarter of the SWO convention offering would go for literacy! Offering monies would fund a travel grant for a new reader to attend the New Readers Congress in Washington, D.C., and new reader books for rural libraries.

At this point literacy coordinator Colleen Last contacted me, and together we discussed possible books and other suitable items to donate to libraries for new readers. (See the Mission: Action column, December 1991 LWT, for a related story.)

The SWO board decided to identify communities with a population of 2000 or under that had an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America church and a public library. Nineteen such communities were identified in the Southeastern Iowa Synod.

The books for new readers were ordered from the publishers, along with a catalog or flyer. When the orders arrived, Women of the ELCA bookplates were attached and the books were bagged in plastic draw-

string bags from Lutheran Brotherhood. A letter to each librarian and a press release were included. At the cluster leadership retreat the books were dedicated and then hand-delivered to each library.



Book carriers from the Southeastern Iowa SWO hand-deliver books for new readers to area libraries.

Nineteen communities benefited from the care and concern of the Synodical Women's Organization. A total of 156 books or videos were given to the 19 libraries. An added bonus was all the "community" involved in the project: the talking, identifying, brainstorming, planning, pasting, sorting, packing, and carrying.

That's one way to play out in the community. Thank you, Colleen, and the Southeastern Iowa Synodical Women's Organization! ■

*Faith Fretheim
Director for Literacy*

MISSION:

Growth

Meet the Rev. Karen Battle

ed most of my life
n a 10-mile ra-
of Trinity Lu-
an Seminary
mbus, Ohio),"

the Rev. Karen
e, Women of the
A's new director
educational re-
ces.

t before attend-
he ELCA semi-
, she explored

al different Christian confes-
"I now embrace Lutheran the-
y as my theology of *choice* after
ne of searching. I knew I was
d to serve God, from childhood."
aren Battle attended Ohio State
iversity and Ohio University,
ying journalism and commun-
ins, and worked in business for
ile. She belonged to a small con-
ation in Columbus where "mem-
were very affirming of my
s—I became everything from
driver to treasurer." Karen decid-
"Okay, it's time." She went to
k on her Master of Divinity de-
at Trinity Lutheran Seminary
single parent of two.

he was ordained at New Hope
eran Church on Chicago's West
As she took part in Clinical Pas-
Education at an area hospital,
was angered by the lack of sen-
ity and compassion she encoun-
d for people with AIDS. "AIDS is



a political disease be-
cause it largely af-
fects a segment of our
population seen as
throwaway people.
That means we need
to do battle *first* to get
folks' attention, *then*
to get money to sup-
port efforts."

She took a position
with an agency that
worked to educate

parishes about AIDS. "The church
provides us a wonderful opportunity
to grow, if we are willing—but growth
is not easy," she says. Growth, for
her, is "learning to value individual
worth not because of what I believe
about a person, but because of what
God has said about that person."

On October 7, 1991, she started
work with the Women of the ELCA
as director of educational resources.

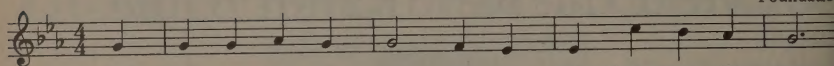
What are Karen's hopes for her
ministry with Women of the ELCA?
"More than anything, I hope to share
and learn of other women's experi-
ences, so that I can strengthen and
be strengthened. There is tremen-
dous diversity in our church and
world, and we will all be the richer
for experiencing it. My mother said
a long time ago, 'Karen, put your
hand on the plow and work away,'
and that's what I'm doing..." ■

*Cynthia Mickelson
for Mission: Growth*

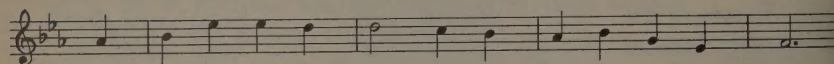
"God's Word Alive And Active!"

Gladys G. Moore

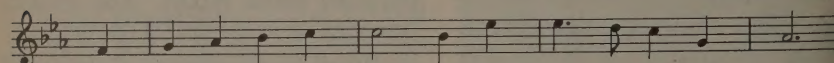
Setting: Aural
(“The Church’s”
Foundation)



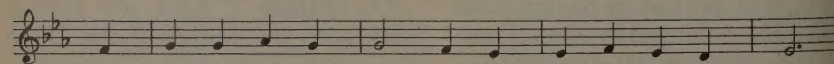
1. God's Word a - live and ac - tive pro - claimed through-out the years,
2. God's Word a - live and ac - tive de - clared the whole world round,
3. God's Word a - live and ac - tive is of - fered free to all,
4. God's Word a - live and ac - tive is Je - sus Christ our Lord,
5. God's Word a - live and ac - tive our song of songs will be;



Still com - forts us when hurt - ing and calms our hid - den fears.
In tongues of man - y peo - ples and signed with - out a sound.
In ev - 'ry tribe and na - tion so all will hear God's call.
God's gift of love in - car - nate that all might be re - stored.
Its mes - sage we will fol - low through - out e - ter - ni - ty.



God's Word of truth and jus - tice sets wea - ry cap - tives free,
This Word of hope and free - dom speaks deep - ly to the soul
To feed the hun - gry chil - dren, give drink to those who thirst,
The whole cre - a - tion longs for the day when we're set free
And when the saints are gath - ered and death has ceased to be,



And joins God's ho - ly peo - ple in new com - mun - i - ty.
Of those who long for one - ness and yearn to be made whole.
And serve the hu - man fam - 'ly by put - ting God's will first.
To live as God in - tend - ed with sa - cred dig - ni - ty.
We'll praise our won - drous Mak - er in songs of vic - to - ry.

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The Rev. Gladys G. Moore, an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America clergyperson and now an assistant to the bishop of the New Jersey Synod, composed the American Bible Society 175th anniversary song, celebrating community through God's word.

ers, from inside front cover

[] is the first time we have been
enthusiastic about the studies since
merger. . . . Hooray for the
successes! Let's hope 1992 will be
really good.

Carol Ulrich

Ashby, Minnesota

LWT Help?

can relate to many of the stories
of grief and comfort in "Jesus Wept"
[July/August LWT]. My mother
died just a month ago and I had a
year-old niece killed in a car
accident. There is much comfort in
knowing they are with God and
that there is no longer suffering.
There is a time of grief and
know that my family and I have
been going through for about eight
years since our daughter, Nancy,
died as she is lesbian, and a year
ago when our youngest son,
Timothy, told us he was gay. I went
through denial, guilt, and blaming.
I received comfort from our pastors,

who were accepting and under-
standing. A meaningful and helpful
experience was attending the
Constituting Convention of Women
of the ELCA in 1987 when an
interest group [for families of
homosexuals] was held. This was
the first positive experience I had
with gay people outside my family
and the reason I attended the
convention.

I would like to know what the
Women of the ELCA are doing. . . .
I know there is a lot of pain and
frustration with society and the
church regarding gays. Can LWT
help?

Jean Huffey

Waterville, Iowa

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"Ujamaa is a Swahili word that means 'familyhood,' the entire community woven together in all of life."

Lynda Tidemann, p.

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